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FRIGHTFULNESS AS CHRISTIANITY

BY MORRISON I. SWIFT

THERE is much justice in the resentful claim of Germany that she is not understood by the rest of the world. Of all countries the United States understands her least. The mistake of Americans is their verdict that Germany is war-mad and their expectation that when the war subsides she will recover her equilibrium and become sane, good-natured and well-behaved, cured by remorse and time.

This will not happen. If the entire world is not to be hers, Germany must be forced to abjure her new standards by impact with the absolute impossibility of their achievement, and must be irretrievably routed on her own intellectual ground. To conquer her intellectually means that better standards of life than those that have fed and fortified her murderous pride must be adopted and incorporated into the vital fabric of other nations. This may be arduous, because through long immunity from upheavals that sweep away social foundations and call for flexibility and constructiveness to make the earth habitable again, nations and individuals have grown inelastic and unimaginative. Now, social foundations are being swept away, ours as well as the rest. Those of Europe are all but gone; with them, whatever the war's outcome, ours will go. The whole world will have to be rebuilt on a new basis. If that basis is not to be some form of slavery to Germany, the internal peace system of the nations which Germany wills to destroy—and the United States is one—must be superior to that which she has yet shown or can produce.

The fatuity of neutral nations who like America stand aside, flattering themselves that they are escaping the sinister consequences of the war, thus demonstrates itself overpoweringly from both the physical and spiritual points of view. German victory in the field would extinguish the

possibility of altering Teuton intellectual standards, crowning them, in the German mind, with the utterly unanswerable sanction of triumphant fact. Beneficently to apply them to the rest of the world would be merely the logical execution of a victory-certified mission. In the Teuton gospel, facts, not manuscripts, are the revelations, and authority is the progeny of ability. Before the bar of the German soul Germany's duty to bring all mankind under her kindly knife, to rule and recreate it after the patterns that her brain has manufactured, will be established in steel.

Neutrality in such circumstances is merely awaiting one's turn to die. The German statesman who is reported to have said, "It will not be long before we will dance over the grave of England," would have told more truth if he had added, "And then we shall dance over the grave of the United States." So it will be if the Germans reach London, such has long been the design of Berlin.

Of the four policies open to the United States it is almost certain that that of partial but insufficient preparedness will be chosen. These possible courses are: 1, pacifism, or complete unpreparation; 2, partial, but too little preparation; 3, adequate preparedness to resist attacks; 4, union with the Allies, once for all to eradicate the predatory militarism of the Central Powers of Europe.

Hampered by the pacifists and hyphenates, the third and fourth programmes are likely to be rejected and a compromise made on the second. This will accord with the far-reaching plans of Berlin and oppose no serious obstacle to the attainment of the Germanic goal of dancing on the grave of the United States. A Germany that can crush the present coalition against her will possess herself of Europe and assemble all its immense resources for wider military aims, as she has heretofore so incomparably organized the resources of her own lesser Empire. America will be called upon to repel this new military giant transcending many times the strength of the Germany of yesterday and to-day—to repel it with a preparation contemplating only the Germany of the past, and framed on the fallacy that the present Allies will still exist as potent forces for the compression of Pan-German ambitions. It is forgotten that if the Allies fall before German force, England, France and Italy as Powers will be extinct; Russia, mercilessly crippled, will be kept so by the Teuton mailed fist; all European restraint

on Germany will be practically removed, while most of the strength that was restraint will be absorbed into Germany's body to swell her fighting might. The United States will then stand alone, the only surviving democracy in the world, her natural friends and defenders destroyed because she would not save them, to face a supremely organized and armed German Europe, thirsting both for revenge and world-dominion.

It will then be impossible for us to take refuge in the fragile spectre of preparedness with which we are now flirting. If Germany prevails in the present struggle nothing will be preparedness short of American militarization equal in all respects to that of a Pan-German Europe. Anything less will infallibly terminate in German absorption of the American hemisphere. Nor can this complete preparation be gradual or delayed as the official schemes contemplate, for in military affairs Germany, having a long start of us, acts with lightning celerity, while we debate and moralize. Our dilatory methods, pacific hallucinations, and the meagre defense measures projected at Washington leave us exposed to pillage by the Germanic Powers even if the war ends indecisively. Only drastic defeat will effect the capture or destruction of their fleets, and with these intact and both nations armed to the last man, fired with war-lust and released from all former codes of honor, what could be more lusciously alluring than the United States, fictitiously protected by the third-rate projects of defense now sketched, which for the most part will not have advanced beyond the paper stage? We are an unsheltered island in the world's seething turmoil. Under our present scant plans for safety it will take years to place us in fractional readiness for the tempest that is lashing our shores, liable to overwhelm us any week, month or year, perhaps depriving us of half our territory, perhaps bringing our national existence, with its sacred guardianship of the world's greatest republican experiment, to a close.

If, in the light of these undeniable dangers, we select the third form of preparedness and determine not to be found unready for any possible attack, it is necessary for us to begin to develop military power of the first order at once, and to prosecute the work as if we were already at war. Assuming our adhesion to epicene neutrality, the end of the war must find us with such military vigor that the Teuton

Powers though wholly triumphant will not dare to assail us. This of necessity will be but the first step in a military career that can have no end if the German armies are not shattered and Germany purged of its Hohenzollerns. These events failing, we shall have to enter on an armament race with Germany for survival, adopting *in toto* all the abhorrent tactics that have made her unconquerable and detested, and spending our best genius to outspeed her in discoveries that kill. We shall be forced to become a nation-army as she is today—a State that is simply a supreme fighting beast. All the centuries of the past since life began on the earth will have led up to nothing but this. We shall hold none of the illusions of sometime world peace that cheered cannon-crushed Europe until yesterday: we shall know that a conflict is preparing in which half of civilized humanity will be wiped out, as much more horrible and final a conflict than the present war as the concentration of the whole ability of the white race on new means of destruction during the years of furious preparation can make it. That combat will be the suicide of civilization, if not of white mankind, and will transfer the control of the world to other human breeds. Germany, who has undertaken to subjugate and usurp the earth, will sink into nothingness with her strangled victims.

The only sure preventive of this utter human collapse is American adoption of the fourth method of preparedness—alignment with the nations that are now fighting to defend the world from slavery to the Teuton and Turk. This is rational preparedness and there is no other, for this stops the growth of a ravening monster which otherwise by every indication will eventually escape all human control. Today if ever is the time to deal with and humanize power-debauched Germany by extirpating the cancerous militarism of Prussia, which, left to its course, will devour Christendom. If an infallible seer could assure us that the Allies alone can do this, we might be warranted in inaction: but where is that seer? Faith, hope, guesses, statistics, heroic assertion, luminous historical analogies, flawless psychic proof—these are not knowledge: yet on such phantoms the United States is staking its liberty, its civilization, its salvation, and those of the world.

It is a curious thing that when America is entrusted with the destiny of the human race Americans do not see it; that they invite unutterable calamities in the future in order to

avoid very slight ones now; that they are willing to take the risk of a welter of bloodshed hereafter to keep themselves free from a very moderate participation in bloodshed in the present. These are phenomena wholly discordant with American history and the past spirit of the people. Even on the purely material plane the nation's intellect is playing it false. The best protective investment that America can make is in Europe. Incomparably the greatest bulwark of the United States is the European Allies. Viewed financially alone, if Germany overwhelms them, we shall be obliged out of our own resources to create a strength equal to the whole restraining power they have heretofore exercised on the German Empire; that is, the American pocket-book will have to meet alone the costs of protection against the German Group that have hitherto been shared among the Allies to maintain their own safety. We imagine that our neutrality is saving us money; in reality, in the long run, it is probably the costliest policy that a nation ever pursued. The outlay of wealth needed by us fully to ensure Germany's conclusive defeat, and to set on foot within her such spiritual cleansing and social regeneration as will render her no longer a pestilent world-danger, would be trifling compared with the endless and stupendous expense we shall have to sustain if Germany as victor hews down all European defenses. Besides this we shall be forced to increase our human outlay to the same extent as the material, exacting of all men hard years of war-training in preparation for more hideous forms of military death than have yet been conceived. By investing our wealth and strength to shatter the military power and world-dominion dream of the Prussian Huns, we may elude this fate. Not otherwise.

It is at this moment of desperate peril for all that free men love that American intelligence seems to have suffered eclipse. A crude pacifism, shallow and ill-reasoned, has spread its paralysis far and wide, when every day counts for future centuries—for it will take hundreds of years to recover the ground that is slipping away from us now through our torpor. Why, then, has pacifism suddenly, in this paramount crisis, developed such immense corrupting force?

Pacifism, with the world as it is, derives its power not from inherent virtue but from the condition of the medium in which it is propagated. The minds of the people have

undergone a long debilitating and perverting medication through which certain ideas have become set as hardened structural deposits. The one concerning us is that Christendom is Christian. If this is questionable we need not trouble ourselves with the pacifist faith that all Christians will react appropriately to non-resistance by ceasing aggression. If there are nations that have basically abandoned Christianity, the pacifists who counsel other nations to lay down their arms and trust in love are apostles of suicide.

Germany is precisely such a character. As relating to nations she has exorcised and expunged Christianity. What she has done with it internally is at this moment beside the question: as a national individual she has entered on a new savagery entirely surpassing all the former qualifications of savagery. It is inaccurate and illusory to say that she has relapsed into paganism, however, for her present growth is a graduation from Christianity after intimate knowledge and long trial of it, whereas the pagans had possessed no Christianity and knew nothing about it. This is what makes the German repeal of the Christian religion vastly more than a reformation: it is a religious revolution. The step has been taken through no accident or inadvertence: never was anything done more orderly and circumspectly: Germany has calmly gone over Christian principles, weighed them in the scales of her thought, brought the trained intellects of her universities to analyze and dissect them, and rejected them all. What she has reared in their place is a nation-toward-nation creed, the product not of tradition but of her present mentality and desires, a people-created gospel that is just as sacred to the German nation as Christianity was in its flower, and immeasurably more dynamically impelling than any German religion has been for a long time. Yet there has been no overt religious crisis or even ecclesiastical ripple; the old forms and dogmas persist intact as respected impossibilities or venerated hypothetical futures, but their spirit and essential content have been transmuted into new meanings and aims. Germany knows how to use the subtle current psychology of trans-idealization. This has saved the religion-changers from the archaic error of making a stand on word-paintings and names, and so has enabled them to slip in the new for the old smoothly and without alarm or complaint. Better still, they have done it with such art that the professional moralists and theologians have

marched with the heavy brain-weights of superman science and been of the greatest assistance in this painless extinction of Christianity.

The secret of the easy triumph of the new Teuton evangel, and a powerful source of enduring strength, is the claim that for the first time it brings the realization of internal Christianity within reach. By throwing overboard international Christianity it heralds the swift fruition of intra-national Christianity. It differs from the cult that was, through its dictum that the Christian results hitherto aimed at by individuals and groups can be attained only by means of the large nation-community, operating organically for Christian ends. Attainable Christianity is confined to these national communities. Christian principles are wholly inapplicable between nation-communities, and if the attempt to act on them is made, no less a disaster than the overthrow of the nation trying it will follow, with the consequent collapse of all the important Christian achievements within its boundaries.

For Christianity to thrive in the greatest degree the nation must be carried to the highest point of development. Hence the race or people that would do most to serve and evolve Christianity is the one which most strenuously promotes the growth in might and magnitude of its organized national self. Christian methods are not to obtrude or be practised in this enterprise, for that would nullify Christian advancement in the only sphere where to any purpose Christianity can advance.

There is another ingredient in the elemental propulsiveness of this doctrine. The very essence of religion is transformed. It ceases to be in any important sense an affair of personal emotion or of individual action or conduct; it becomes achievement, yet not that of the individual, but mass achievement. Personal emotion, so great a factor in the lapsed Christianity, receives its value from its contribution to mass results. It has given way to mass emotion. At once it is clear that the worth of religious feeling depends upon the significance of the achievement toward which it is directed. Individual strivings about which religion has heretofore revolved being necessarily narrow and limited, the religious sentiment connected with associated activity through which great things are done is incomparably more moral, holy and godlike. It is here that religion attains its

culmination—in the splendid deeds of individuals bound together as a nation, upbuilding this gigantic and exalted entity. As the nation thus grows, its Christian proficiency toward the personal units composing it also grows, and in these conjoined is the perfect Christian harvest.

But this is not all; the theory of Christian promulgation, biblically enjoined, is likewise transvalued into a Prussian war-song. Other nations must be converted to the grand godliness which Germany has first comprehended and lived. This is not to be done by spreading pious literary dogmas and gaining courteous superficial acceptances thereto after the manner of Christian missionaries, but by propagating with disciplinary fervor the Teuton capacity for great deeds. The crown of the new-born Prussian Christianity is passionate enthusiasm for colossal master-strokes. Offering this priceless cult to mankind, Germany meets difficulties and dangers which mere preaching would not encounter. Other nations, stiff-necked, stupid, and jealous, spurn the gift of salvation through Prussia and resist redemption; neither for their own good nor for that of the world can they be left to perish in the stagnancy they love; by rejecting the German illumination they prove their unworth as nations and forfeit their prerogative to exist: it is then the exercise of higher Christianity on Germany's part forcibly to take them under control and to coerce them into the Christian evolution which they shirk, either by making them vassal States or incorporating them into herself. The greater nations must be thus dealt with in any case, for by Christianizing them after the German model of training and inspiration for conquest, they would be shaped into intolerable competitors for Germany's supreme place in the sun.

The new international Christianity invented by Germany culminates, then, either in one absolute world-empire held down by blood and steel, or in a series of utterly ruthless wars of extermination, leaving the earth to be repeopled by such lower stocks as happen through their remoteness or insignificance to escape the repeated tornadoes of death. To the Germans, the wars and preparations for wars thus demanded, and their terrific prosecution without the slightest regard for humanity, are the noblest obedience to Christian obligation and the loftiest exercise of the Christian life. To strike frightfully and fiendishly is German Christianity in its es-

sence. To refrain, to be weakly humane, to let other nations live on peacefully, absorbing Nature's space and riches because through exploded religious tenets and fantastic misinterpretations of cosmic law they do not resist but turn the other degenerate cheek, is inexpiable contumacy toward the God revealed by Berlin. In her most solemn and passionate conviction, Germany is not outraging religion or righteousness, but feels herself to be the only truly Christian Power. Her whole being is mastered by the sublimity of her divine appointment to raise the rest of the world to her level, in accomplishing which all extremes of treachery, fraud, force, frightfulness and savagery are right.

With this understanding of the Teuton creed, Germany's crusade for world dominion is a veritable holy war, reinforced by all the sacred enthusiasms of a new religion, scientifically constructed, and, mingled with its brutal savagery and shameless atavism, embodying some of the most modern scientific ideas.

Into this murky abyss of German spiritual metamorphosis, not American pacifists alone, but even the thinkers of the allied peoples of Europe, shrink from gazing. It makes the problem of dealing with Germany much less terrible and perplexing if they can assure themselves that Germany will recant; and they do so. There is still in the civilized a strong remainder of the barbarous superstition that admitting sinister realities has the effect of creating them, while resolute denial of their being causes them to lessen and disappear. That Germany has gone Prussian and bad the thinkers of course declare, but that she is basically sound, meaning that she is still rooted in the old moralities and creeds, they bravely insist, and they look forward with cheerful faith to a reunion of Germany with her enemies on this basis.

This expectation is typical of an almost universal invasion of soft optimism, which is obscuring the most fundamental and destiny-shaping truth of this war. In it there is no vision of the German motive, no insight that Germany, besides discarding the old morality and religion, has abolished the "one God" in whom the rest of the world dreams of reunion, and has created a new God of her own.

So when nations expect the Germans to be shocked at themselves by and by, to feel the nemesis of a bitter shame as they look at themselves in the glass of memory, and then

contritely, in sackcloth of soul, to return to the old conceptions of conduct and cult: when they anticipate a resurrection of the German conscience and a love-feast of the warring nations around the Christian communion table with Germany in tears, they are egregiously mistaken. These things will never happen. Germany is not going to repent. She is not going to see ghosts of the massacred *Lusitania* dead, or spectres of the victims of her Zeppelin raids on women and children; her conscience will not awaken, for she has a new conscience that is firmly steeled against penitence and pain, and will suffer only if she does not succeed. In failure it will be the conscience of the martyr. She will eternally glory in all the frightfulness she inflicts because it is done for her new Christ—which is a Germanized world. The earth redeemed is an earth made Germany-incarnate.

Through this transfiguration of fiendishness autocracy has accomplished an absolute oneness with God, into which, by a further brilliant stroke of the German science of deceptive psychology, the common people, down to the very meanest and most trampled, enter through the divinity of the mission of savage conquest. Deeper than all other motives of this mammoth world-tragedy is the resolution of autocracy to survive. Farther-sighted than democracy, it has perceived that it cannot survive by leading a parallel existence with democracy, since in the game of peace democracy slowly, painfully, but resistlessly wins. The last hope of autocracy is a war for extermination of its rivals and possession of the world. Democracy must be slain. The bludgeoning of the freer nations of Europe began the drama, in due sequence to be followed by a death-thrust at the great trans-Atlantic republic, with whose extinction popular freedom will perish from the earth. It is a tragic scheme to throttle the evolution of humanity in order that a single commonplace family may vampire forever on the heart's-blood and happiness of mankind. For its benefit all humanity must be reduced to a slavery never before dreamed of or physically possible.

For this climax autocracy prepared itself consummately. It made the greatest modern engines, science and education, its servants, and destroyed the ancient forces that were in its way—civilization, humanity, morality and Christianity—creating in the laboratory servile substitutes for them that would act as its tools. All these agencies it brought to the

construction of its stupendous war-machine on which it was to ride to omnipotence. The crisis produced is new in kind in the world's life, because it is the *scientific* union of autocracy with God. Never before could there be this phenomenon. Science had first to grow up before this amalgamation could be wrought, perpetuating with a thousand-fold greater tenacity the hereditary union of the two in the past.

Great as is the tragedy of this long-planned upsurge to assassinate democracy, there is a greater one. That is the disunion of democracy in this crisis through the failure of the American nation to play its part; it is American insensibility to the vast meaning of events—neglect of this opportunity, perhaps the last one, forced on the world by autocracy itself, to take up the gauntlet and crush autocracy out of existence. While autocracy summons every atom of its strength to extinguish freedom, not scrupling to turn Europe or the whole world into a hell for that purpose, all democracy's weaknesses conspire for its own death. With the guilelessness of unweaned virtue democracy temporizes and compromises, suffereth long and is blind, excuses autocracy's crimes and affectionately denies that autocracy aims at its murder, cries that the world is wide enough for two, inappeasable antagonisms to dwell together in unity, concedes autocracy the right to maintain itself, though that entails infinite grief and irreparable ruin to all the peoples of the planet. In the loftiest hour of existence and opportunity, democracy shirks.

World-democracy can be inaugurated by stern and stalwart concert of all-democracy against all-autocracy. That alone will bring world peace, for in a world-system half ancient and autocratic and half modern and democratic, no truce or peace is possible. If German autocracy is abolished the Russian people themselves will take care of their absolutism. The alliance of the United States with the nations now fighting Germany, for which the murderous uprising of absolutism has prepared the way, to be maintained and developed into permanent organic federation, will democratize the world.

MORRISON I. SWIFT.